

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Approved 12/12/2023

October 24, 2023

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order in the second floor meeting room at the Community Center on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Scott Walker, Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Josh Fenollosa and Sarah Carrier. Recreation Director Joe Connelly was also present. Shirley Canniff and Phil Lasker were not in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Amy Horton - Bark for Life, Judy Weingberg – Menotomy Gates Project

Preliminary Matter: Scott Walker, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance and welcomed anticipated speakers and members of the public to the Recreation Commission meeting.

Special Event Approval – Bark for Life

Amy Horton was present to answer questions from the Commission about the annual event request.

- Event request submitted by AHS student, Indigo Blankepoor.
- Ms. Rothenberg – Requested information on cost and fundraising. \$10 registration fee per dog. Raised \$7300 last year for American Cancer Society.
- Mr. Connelly – Event has had no issues in the past.
- Mr. Walker – Application states 50 participants. Last year there were 30 participants.
- Ms. Mayer – Advised that dogs were not allowed in the playground area and that off-leash hours on the Arlington side of the Rez end at 9am but continue past 9am on the Lexington side.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve the event request, seconded by Ms. Mayer. Approved 3-0. Mr. Connelly will issue the permit.

Film Permitting Policy Review

Mr. Connelly presented an updated policy for review. He noted that the previous policy was over 10 years old and required small modifications. He also stated that the most recent production project was very successful with the participants being very easy to work with and respectful of all rules and conditions.

Ms. Mayer – Requested to have the word “additional” removed from the fees section of the General Guidelines.

Mr. Fenollosa – Recommended adding the link to the Parks and Recreation Commission Rules and Regs.

Ms. Mayer motioned to approve the updated policy as amended, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. Approved 3-0.

Menotomy Rocks Park Jason Street Access Gates

Mr. Connelly and Ms. Weinberg met at Menotomy Rocks Park with Ornamental Iron Work Inc. to discuss the installation of a pedestrian gate and a double gate for the vehicle entrance. Ms. Weinberg stated that funding will be provided by the FOMRP. Estimated budget is \$5800 for both gates.

- DPW – Existing gate is beyond repair.
- Both gates will be of the same ornamental style. The original installation was done by the same company.
- A 3' wide gate will be added to the pedestrian entrance.

Mr. Fenollosa – Inquired whether the Historical Commission needed to be consulted. Mr. Connelly stated that the style is identical to the existing gates but would consult with JoAnn Robinson.

Mr. Walker – Advised to ensure ADA compliance.

Ms. Mayer – Supports the vehicle gate but does not support the pedestrian gate.

- Wear and tear from constant opening and closing.
- Additional maintenance would be needed.
- Unwelcoming, “gated community” feel.

Mr. Connelly – Agreeing with Ms. Mayer stated that the Reservoir gates have been repaired four times and the Spy Pond Playgrounds gates twice just from volume of usage.

Ms. Reisberg – Suggested that the park would be safer for children with a gate.

Ms. Rothenberg, Mr. Fenollosa and Mr. Walker – Agreed with Ms. Mayer’s comments about the unwelcoming feeling of an entrance gate. Potential hazards were also identified including sidewalk obstructions from the gate being left open and the constant swinging to open and close. The location of the pedestrian walkway, “pin-style” gates, wood removal and granite posts were also discussed.

Ms. Mayer motioned to approve the replacement of the vehicular gate with ornamental iron pending discussion with the Historical Commission, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. Approved 3-0.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings –

- Permitting of alcohol for events on property under Park Commission jurisdiction.
- Cecily Miller - murals, TBD in November
- David Morgan and Claire Richter – CPA request, property jurisdiction discussion. Mr. Connelly will forward information to Commission members for review.

Correspondence Received

Emails were received from the following members of the public:

- Beth Melofchik – Off-leash dog times
- Dana Simon – Menotomy Dog Policy
- Amanda Fredo – Off-leash dogs at Parallel Park

Approval of Minutes

- Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve the minutes of September 26, 2023, as amended, seconded by Ms. Mayer and approved 3-0.

New Business

Mr. Connelly – CPA has invited the Commission to submit final applications for Menotomy and Courts projects.

Ms. Mayer, also a CPA Committee member - Both projects were determined to be eligible for CPA. CPAC did note a \$1M shortfall in the budget and may require the Commission to prioritize and/or phase the projects. Ms. Mayer advised that state funding would be available toward the end of the year, which could change funding availability.

Mr. Tironi – How much funding was needed for both projects? \$1.9M.

Public Comment –

Ms. Reisberg – Concerns surrounding alcohol permitting policies noting broken glass in the park. Suggested recycling bins and possible fees.

Mr. Tironi – Requested the Commissions support to install signage at McClellan designating “no mow” areas”. All costs will be paid for the Conservation Commission. The signage design will match Hurd Field. The “no mow” policy is needed to protect resting habitats and pollinators. Mr. Tironi will also consult Mr. Connelly about verbiage for signage to be installed at Mt. Gilboa to advise against creating bicycle paths on Conservation land.

Mr. Fenollosa – Requested more details about sign locations and numbers. Mr. Tironi presented diagrams of proposed locations. The Commission agreed that no vote was required and that Mr. Connelly will handle the signage requests administratively.

Ms. Rothenberg requested that FOMRP be reminded that all Spooky Walk signage needs to be removed after the event. Ms. Weinberg stated that she was on the committee and would relay the message to the group. Mr. Connelly will also send a reminder email.

Nancy Knoff – Inquired about the possibility of extending the Wellington Park path to Brattle Street. Ms. Mayer stated that the idea is possible but there is no funding anticipated at this time. Ms. Mayer shared a brief history of architect Mia Lehr’s work in Arlington and the linear park study she conducted around 1974-1976. In recent times the idea of extending Grove to Brattle Streets arose again but there was no funding to support the project. Additionally, the project became a flood control-based project. Ms. Knoff also suggested a pilot program to allow off-leash dogs at the Reservoir (aligning with Lexington) noting that 6-9am was restrictive. She also suggested allowing dogs to be off-leash in the woods at Menotomy Rocks Park. Mr. Connelly stated that by-laws prevent changing the off-leash hours. Mr. Connelly stated that off-leash dog discussions would need to be added as an agenda item to allow both sides to have a voice. The ACO has compiled data and will be making recommendations. Ms. Mayer encouraged discussion to be held through a public meeting process versus continuous small discussions at every PRC meeting. Ms. Rothenberg noted that off-leash dogs is a very contentious topic and recommended hiring a mediator and police presence for a public meeting.

Mr. Connelly presented the following statistics – Arlington offers off-leash dog hours every day between 6-9am at about 15 town parks in addition to the \$250K Thorndike dog park. Research of surrounding towns/cities shows that Arlington offers far more off-leash dog time than other communities.

Mr. Walker concluded the discussion by stating that the Commission would discuss the issue further at a future meeting to determine how to move forward. No votes or decisions would be made without the attendance of the other Commissioners. Ms. Weinberg requested an opportunity to conduct a walk through with Commission members to plead the case of off-leash dog supporters. The Commission uniformly noted that the number of complaints against off-leash dogs was equal to those requesting more hours and additional off-leash locations.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to adjourn at 8:15pm, seconded by Mr. Walker. Approved 3-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Deanna Stacchi.